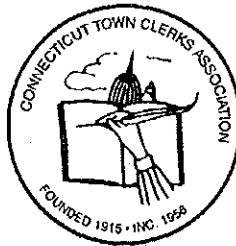


Connecticut Town Clerks Association, Inc.

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2012 Legislative Committee

Testimony

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Friday, March 2, 2012

Good morning Senator Slossberg, Representative Morin and distinguished members of the GAE Committee. My name is Essie Labrot and I am testifying on behalf of the Connecticut Town Clerk's Association (CTCA). I am the legislative Vice-chair of the Town Clerk's Association and the Town Clerk of West Hartford. I am here today to testify in support of **HJ34 – Resolution Proposing An Amendment to the State Constitution to Grant Authority To The General Assembly Regarding Election Administration.**

The Association supports amending the constitution to grant authority to the General Assembly to determine the manner in which voters will participate in elections. However, it is important to note that while supporting this effort, we continue to oppose “no excuse absentee ballots” or all mail-in voting due to the increased potential of fraud and disenfranchisement of the voter.

Our current system for processing Absentee Ballots could not handle the increase in volume under a No Excuse/Mail in system. The Mail in option would quickly strain an outdated, inefficient and manual process for mailing, accounting for, counting and securing storage of Ballots. Any significant additional volume would require a total overhaul of existing procedures and processes. States that use a form of no excuse absentee/mail in balloting have seen increases of 200 – 300%.

At higher volumes, there is greater opportunity for errors. It would be increasingly difficult to properly ensure the ballots are being voted by the applicant. Town Clerks agree with the State Elections Enforcement Commission that the potential for abuse is greater under an Absentee Ballot system than under an Early Voting Polling site where an individual would need to produce identification before being presented with a ballot.

We are concerned that many voters under an Absentee Ballot/Mail in system may be disenfranchised. With Mail In voting, many more votes are not counted due to envelopes having no signature, not received in time or being mismarked. The State of Missouri had to discount 8,000 Absentee Ballots in 2008 for these reasons. Those 8,000 ballots could have changed the outcome of the election. The United States Election Assistance Commission reported in 2006 that at least 380,000 mail in ballots were not counted, and estimated in 2008 perhaps as many as 500,000 to 750,000 were left uncounted and the Minnesota 2008 Senate race hinged on uncounted Absentee Ballots with the margin being within 350 votes.

Our research shows that in Connecticut an average of 3% of absentee ballots are rejected or arrive late. If we have 400,000 CT residents vote by mail, that 3% could be 12,000 votes not counted – certainly an opportunity for “post election litigation”.

At an Early Voting Polling site these voters would have been given another chance to vote their ballots correctly and not be disenfranchised.

States that have chosen to use No Excuse Absentee/Mail in Ballots typically have County forms of government and have centralized Voting Centers where the process is administered by Election Officials whose sole purpose is to run the Election.

In conclusion, while the Town Clerks Association does not support the concept of No Excuse Absentee Balloting, we recognize the interest and need to offer voting alternatives that can address turnout, while keeping the integrity of the process as well as cost consideration in these difficult budget times. The Town Clerks would welcome being part of this discussion that would help come up with possible solutions that will benefit all our constituents.

Respectfully submitted,

Essie Labrot
Vice Chair, Legislative Committee, Connecticut Town Clerks Association
Town Clerk, West Hartford